Consultation paper on higher education base funding review

Universities and the higher education sector are today invited to contribute their views about the future of higher education funding, with the release of a consultation paper by the Panel for the higher education base funding review.

The Minister for Tertiary Education, Senator Chris Evans, today welcomed the release of the consultation paper which sets the framework for the review and invites submissions from the higher education sector.

“I encourage the higher education sector and other interested stakeholders to present their formal submissions to the Panel on the issues raised in the paper,” Senator Evans said.

“The Government is strongly committed to in-depth collaboration with the higher education sector in our ongoing reform process, to ensure the needs of a new generation of students are met.”

The terms of reference and expert Panel were announced by Senator Evans on 26 October 2010.

This review fulfils a recommendation of the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, to establish the principles for public investment in Australian higher education and to ensure that funding levels are competitive and appropriate for the sector.

The Panel will also consider the enduring principles that should underpin the appropriate distribution of funding by discipline, the share of funding from all sources and the best funding model to deliver increased teaching quality.

Chaired by the Hon Dr Jane Lomax-Smith, the Panel will undertake national consultations in early 2011 and provide people from higher education institutions the opportunity to have face to face discussions.

“I welcome consideration by the Panel as to whether current Commonwealth funding structures provide appropriate support for universities to ensure that students remain at university until they complete their studies,” Senator Evans said.
“Currently, as many as 20 per cent of first year undergraduate students discontinue their studies each year.”

The Government, universities and students themselves all have an interest in ensuring that students remain engaged and well supported throughout their university experience.

“We have also set targets for participation – that by 2020, 20 per cent of undergraduate enrolments are people from low SES backgrounds, and by 2025, 40 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds will have a bachelor level qualification or above,” he said.

“Our goal is to create a system that allows more students from a diverse range of backgrounds to achieve a higher education qualification, and find a rewarding job in the knowledge economy.

“I urge the higher education sector to take the opportunity to participate in these important national consultations.”

The review builds on the Government’s substantial new injections of capital and recurrent funding for higher education first announced in the 2009 Budget, including the commitment to lift caps on undergraduate university places for domestic students, at an estimated additional cost of $2.1 billion over five years.

The Government has also invested in a new indexation approach that will provide universities with an estimated additional $2.6 billion over five years from 2011, and more than $4.1 billion from the Education Investment Fund for strategic infrastructure in the tertiary and research sectors.

The Higher Education Base Funding Review Panel will report back to the Government in October 2011.

For a copy of the consultation paper and background paper, please visit www.deewr.gov.au/BaseFundingReview

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